

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Keith, Sir Arthur. *An Autobiography.*
London, 1950. Watts & Co. Pp. 721.
Price 25s.

"I BEGIN this story on a winter evening of February, 1947, in a longish, narrow room which, after an occupation of fifteen years, has grown very dear to me. I call it my study, but in these recent years of dearth of fuel and of bombing warfare it has become the place in which I live, move and have my being. Two walls have crowded bookshelves; the opposite walls have windows which look out to the south-east and to the south-west, and in these winter days let the sun shine upon me." Thus does Sir Arthur Keith, already an octogenarian, begin his seven hundred-odd pages of reminiscences, which apart from anything else represent a considerable feat of literary composition; and, as in that passage quoted above, the style throughout is leisurely, incidents and observations are set down with scientific clarity and exactitude, and the story has the gentle effulgence of winter sunlight.

It is an exciting story because it is in part a success story; the tale of another Scot who, springing from humble farming Aberdeenshire stock, made good by a combination of hard work and native grit and intelligence. Sir Arthur tells us that it was almost by coincidence that he left his father's Aberdeenshire farm to become a medical student at Aberdeen University. But we may be sure that, somehow or other, ambition would have brought him to the top. When after graduating from Aberdeen he went out to Siam as doctor to a mining company he indicates that he was not insensible to the charms of Siamese ladies. Then he goes on: "I put botany aside because it diverted me from my goal; I callously put women aside for the same reason. I had become a confirmed careerist." Personal ambition is a recurrent theme throughout the book.

Returning from Siam, Keith became a

student of the Leipzig embryologist, Professor His, as he hoped it would aid him in getting an anatomical post in England. His hopes were fulfilled, and in his thirtieth year he became senior demonstrator of anatomy to London University. A few years later he moved to the Royal College of Surgeons as the conservator of the museum and Hunterian Professor, and there he continued his researches into the pre-history of man and fossil remains which have brought him to such eminence as an anthropologist. In the twenties honours came thick and fast, including a knighthood in 1921 and, most satisfying of all, the rectorship of his old university. "I had reached a position," he says, "which I had never anticipated even in my wildest dreams. But I was also conscious that my success brought duties. These I resolved to carry out to the best of my ability." During the last years Sir Arthur has lived in Downe, the Kentish village in which Charles Darwin spent so many years, and he gives an interesting account of its "farm," the institution used by the Royal College of Surgeons for surgical research.

Sir Arthur devotes a couple of pages of his book to eugenics, recalling that his friend, Captain George Pitt-Rivers, then president of the "International Organization of Eugenists," invited him down to his Dorsetshire home to open a meeting on the subject. Pitt-Rivers "was a wholehearted eugenicist, ready to adopt sterilization and other compulsory methods which would rid modern populations of their undesirable strains. I, on the other hand, stood back, demanding a much fuller knowledge of the laws of heredity and of selection before proceeding to apply compulsory methods. Like Major Darwin, the Nestor of British Eugenists, I thought our methods should be educational, not compulsory. But just at that time I had been comparing the life led by modern city-dwellers with that led by their tribal ancestors, and had become uneasy about the effects of modern civilization on the minds and bodies of those who are subjected to it

for many generations." He adds: "I did not join the *Eugenics Society*, but that was not because I was sceptical of its aims and methods, but because the Anthropological Institute occupied all my spare energies. I was grateful to the *Society* for electing me to an honorary membership, for I had thus placed at my disposal its journal, the *EUGENICS REVIEW*, from which I learnt much that was of value to me."

If one has any criticism to make of this book it is that parts are inclined to be long-winded and tedious, and trivialities are sometimes allowed to interrupt the main narrative. It is also remarkable that a man of such experience and wisdom has so little to tell us about life in general, or, indeed, on any subject apart from his work, friends, the honours which came to him, and his occasional lecturing tours and travels. One misses the feeling of an interest in life for life's sake. But within its limits this is a fascinating and finely recorded life story, and the production of the book, as regards type, lay-out and photographs, is a tribute to its publishers.

RICHARD RUMBOLD.

MARRIAGE

Stokes, Walter R. *Modern Pattern for Marriage*. London, 1949. Reinhardt and Evans, Ltd. Pp. 110. Price 8s. 6d.

MOST people will enjoy this book. Dr. Stokes writes with brevity, clarity and forthrightness in this English edition of his book, which David Mace's foreword tells us has "won golden opinions" in the United States. The author, in short chapters which deal with all the stages of married life, crystallizes his long clinical experience of helping married couples.

The core of the author's attitude is that "it is important for married partners to realize that potentially the most deeply satisfying and stable thing in marriage is the emotional relationship between themselves. Children provide emotional satisfactions, but they soon grow up and move on to the living

of their own adult lives." It is Dr. Stokes's view that "in our present civilization extra-marital relations by either husband or wife are unwise and dangerous, quite apart from any question of moral judgment." He is clear-headed in following out the implications of his attitudes as when, for example, he says that provided there are no guilt feelings, "masturbation, as a means of relieving tension, may have a place in the sexual life following marriage."

With crisp common sense he advises on honeymoon problems, giving some practical details that are much needed and seldom described in this type of book.

A great deal of the book is dogmatic, but this is immaterial for information which we can accept or reject in our own experiences. It is not so helpful an attitude when Dr. Stokes writes on psychological matters that are still debated.

Throughout his faith in marriage counsellors is a little touching, but if they were all as wise, far-seeing and tolerant as Dr. Stokes, how lucky we all should be!

RACHEL CONRAD.

Society of Friends. *The Marriage Relationship. The Report of a Commission appointed by direction of London Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)*. London, 1949. Central Offices of the Society of Friends, Friends House, Euston Road, London, N.W.1. Pp. 27. Price 9d.

THOUGH the eugenist may be disappointed, and rightly so, by the absence of all reference to biological (as distinct from social) inheritance in these twenty-seven pages, there is much to admire in the combination of idealism and practical common sense with which the rest of the wide field of marriage problems is discussed. "The well-being of any people depends in large measure on the purity, strength and love that mark its family life." The authors have quoted this passage from the Quaker *Book of Discipline*; and it is no empty claim that they are making when they